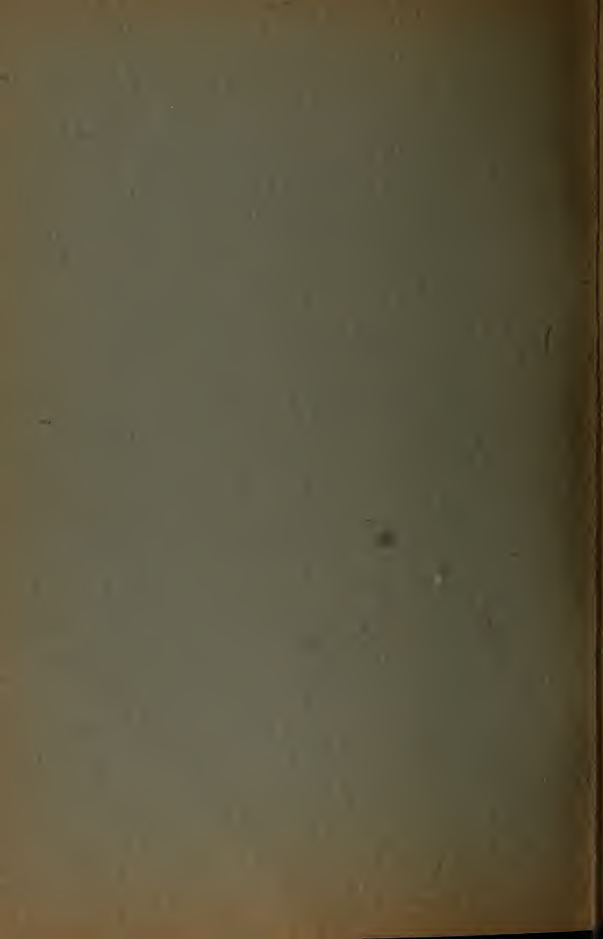


LITTLE BLUE BOOK NO. 517
Edited by E. Haldeman-Julius

Mark Twain

The Philosopher Who Laughed
at the World

Charles J. Finger



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**HALDEMAN-JULIUS COMPANY
GIRARD, KANSAS**

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

MARK TWAIN



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(Samuel Langhorne Clemens: 1835-1910)

To the average newspaper reader, Mark Twain looks as innocent, as innocuous, as the Bible, but few people read the Bible and few read Mark Twain; if they did, they might become aware of the dynamite in both. I will guarantee to pick out from both the Bible and Mark Twain's writings, passages that would unsettle the minds of the rising generation more speedily and effectually than anything written by any American, except perhaps Thoreau.

Indeed, when my good friend Haldeman-Julius, who does extraordinary things in the way of popularizing literature, and is often roundly denounced for doing them by those who profess to have a deep rooted desire to popularize literature—when Haldeman-Julius, I say, asked me to write a booklet with Mark Twain as subject, the thought struck me that in these times of sentimentality and hysteria, it was extremely fortunate that Mark Twain was out of reach of those who devote themselves to the formation of national character, and, if there is some far off place where congenial spirits may converse, that he is probably happy in the companionship of holy company—Rabelais, Swift, Emerson, Sobieski, Chaucer, Byron, Goethe, Beethoven—good men and true all of them. For, certainly, with purity drives and heresy hunting and the anti-Jewish cam-

paign and Volstead and the Ku Klux Klan the real Mark Twain would get but short shrift. I take the anti-Jewish campaign because there comes to mind a passage in a letter that Twain once wrote to his life-long friend, the Rev. J. H. Twitchell. The date of it was 1897, and it was written from Vienna. There follows a passage, given to the end that something of the real Twain may be inferred—given to the end that the reader of this may not be induced to sail any deep waters under false colors, for Twain of the “Jumping Frog” is no more the real Twain than Lincoln of the funny stories was the real Lincoln. Here is the passage.

“ . . . It is Christian and Jew by the horns—the advantage with the superior man as usual—the superior man being the Jew every time and in all countries. Land, Joe, what chance would the Christian have in a country where there were three Jews to ten Christians! Oh, not the shadow of a chance. The difference between the brain of the average Christian and that of the average Jew—certainly in Europe—is about the average between a tadpole’s and an Archbishop’s. It’s a marvelous race—by long odds the most marvelous that the world has produced, I suppose. . . .”

There are no qualifying clauses and I have not dragged the passage from any modifying context. If the passage is not sufficient to damn Twain forever in the hearts and the minds of every Ku Klux Klan man in the country, and every 100 per cent American as well, then most certainly his views on mob rule would. I take the mob-rule viewpoint because it is as enlightening as the opening theme in Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony, or as the couplet

about all men killing the thing they love, in Oscar Wilde's "Ballad of Reading Jail." For it is a viewpoint that shows Mark Twain as being against all irrational impulses, as opposed to irrelevant emotional appeals. Nor is the passage from the letter to be quoted at all isolated or unique. In his works of fiction I have counted more than six distinct references, more or less lengthy, each condemnatory of herd action. But for a beginning, I take the letter, peculiarly significant because it was written at a time when the nation had suffered one of its relapses into emotional insanity, an affliction to which Americans seem peculiarly liable. It was when President McKinley was hovering between life and death, and when hysterical men were talking nonsense by way of revenge about Czolgosz the slayer. In those days, ministers of the gospel outdid themselves in childish utterances, just as so many of them did later in the days of the great war, or as they did in the Goldman-Berkman deportation case, and he who advocated sanity was promptly suspect. Hear Mark Twain then, in a letter dated September 10th, 1901:

" . . . The news of the President looks decidedly hopeful and we are all glad, and the household faces are much improved, as to cheerfulness. Oh, the *talk* in the newspapers! Evidently the Human Race is the same old Human Race. And how unjust, and unreflectingly discriminating the talkers are. Under the unsettling effects of powerful emotion the talkers are saying wild things, crazy things—they are out of themselves and do not know it; they are temporarily insane, yet with one voice they declare the assassin *sane*—a man who has been entertaining fiery and reason-debauching

maggots in his head for weeks and months. Why, no one is sane, straight along, year in and year out, and we know it. Our insanities are of varying sorts and express themselves in varying forms—fortunately harmless forms as a rule—but in whatever form they occur an immense upheaval of feeling can at any time topple us distinctly over the sanity line for a little while; and then if our form happens to be of the murderous kind we must look out—and so must the spectator.

“The ass with the unpronounceable name was probably more insane than usual this week or two back, and may get back upon his bearings by and by, but he was over the sanity-border when he shot the President. It is possible that it has taken him the whole interval since the murder of the King of Italy to get insane enough to attempt the President's life. Without doubt some thousands of men have been meditating the same act in the same interval, but new and strong interests have intervened and diverted their over-excited minds long enough to give them a chance to settle, and tranquilize, and get back upon a healthy level again. *Every* extraordinary occurrence unsettles the heads of hundreds and thousands of men for a few moments or hours or days. If there had been ten kings around when Humbert fell they would have been in great peril for a day or more—and from men in whose presence they would have been quite safe after the excess of their excitement had had an interval in which to cool down. . . .”

Ponder that a moment. There's strong common sense in it—common sense of the kind that is extremely uncommon. You see in it evidence of a clear thinker, a balanced mind, an intellect that keeps itself well in hand. For the day of which he wrote was a day when democracy triumphant had run mad, just as it ran mad when the country went *fanti* over supposed German spies grinding glass into flour, and poisoning horses, and attempting to steal blue prints of county bridges in Tucum-

cari, N. M. It was one of those days, unfortunately none too rare, when blind popular prejudice and brutal fanaticism swayed the masses and when most pernicious sensationalism made of almost every journal in the country a shrieking virago.

Let the matter be got straight and let it be understood that I am reading nothing into the words of Mark Twain but what is plainly there. Also let it be understood that the passage quoted is all important because it reveals the writer of it as a man of no lax mental habit, reveals him as one who would not allow the emotion of the moment to usurp the sway of sovereign reason. For I hold Mark Twain as a true philosopher with a balanced system and as one whose works form a coherent whole. The trouble is that people have lost sight of his message, being dazzled by the means he adopted to deliver it. Yet a second reading of the passage quoted will show many things—will show that he had considered seriously heredity, atavism, degeneracy. The same trend of thought, followed to its logical conclusion in later years, and after much observation, resulted in that masterpiece "The Mysterious Stranger," in that absurdly little-known story on the Journey of Truth, in that speculative essay in dialogue form, "What Is Man?"

In a world holding the odd belief that insanity can at all times be easily recognized and that an insane person is one who raves and shouts and foams at the mouth and smashes things, it must come as a distinct shock to find one who holds that to all outward ap-

pearance there is no difference between the sane and the insane, and that acts showing an imperfect adjustment are proof sufficient of disordered mentality. One remembers Oscar Wilde. And mark, too, the passage in which he tells us that every extraordinary occurrence unsettles the heads of hundreds and thousands of men for a few moments or days or hours. That, I hold, should not be passed over lightly. There's a mighty truth in it. For the average man and the average woman is a highly susceptible creature and mind poisoners are by no means rare. Purveyors of opium and morphine are hedged about with prohibitions and he who would drop strychnine in the way of people at a restaurant would be promptly dealt with as a danger. But those who weave words likely to drive mental defectives over the border-line, go free. That Mark Twain meant all this is shown by another letter, one written in 1873, to the editor of the *Daily Graphic*, in which he is sarcastic anent the exciting headlines displayed for public consumption. I quote again:

| | |
|---|---|
| A Father Killed by His Son. * * | A Court House Fired and Negroes Shot While Escaping. * * |
| Bloody Fight in Ken- tucky. * * | Louisiana Massacre. * * |
| An Eight Year Old Mur- derer. * * | Two to Three Hundred Men Roasted Alive! * * |
| Town in State of Gen- eral Riot. | (Thirty other similar headlines.) |

Obviously, Mark Twain would not be for any curtailment of the liberty of the press nor for

any infringement upon the rights of the speaker, but what he was for was decency, and some assimilation of the press to the ethical standards that are upheld in other parts of the enlightened world as a matter of course. What he deplored was the patent fact that pernicious sensationalism was largely responsible for the creation of emotional criminals, especially those liable to become insane on the incidence of a stress sufficiently severe, and who such were, and where such were, it was, and is, quite impossible to know.

And also note this in the same connection; given absence of excitement, your potential criminal regains his sanity. Again I am not reading my own fancies into the tale. I am stating Mark Twain's belief and find striking confirmation in another passage in a letter. Thus: "I bought a revolver once and traveled twelve hundred miles to kill a man. He was away. He was gone a day. With nothing else to do, I *had* to stop and think—and did. Within an hour—within half of it—I was ashamed of myself—and felt unspeakably ridiculous. I do not know what to call it if I was not insane. During a whole week my head was in a turmoil night and day fierce enough and exhausting enough to upset a stronger reason than mine." There you have the test of experience. Given no cessation of excitement, and Mark Twain might have killed his man and swung at the end of a rope. As it was, he was only a potential criminal.

Observe, Mark Twain was a newspaperman and knew the game. But he had prevision

and knew that the rule of the despot Hate is not limited to any one section of the land, and once aroused, once entrenched in the stronghold of wrong, not law, nor order, nor religion prevail against him. The vessel of civilization goes to pieces and the bonds and rivets that held it, race, nationality, blood ties, life-long associations, sworn fellowships, are as nothing. The hell that is lack of fellowship vomits forth its malignant forces and the yahoo reigns. All that was patiently built in the course of years is shattered in a moment, and, too often, the builders, those who raised their homes, who ploughed the fields, who built the school and the law court and the church—these, by the very cause of their being settled and anchored and unable to flee from the blind fury, fall victims to mob madness in full career. Mercy, charity, benevolence all fly away like thistle-down and the ill weeds of blood lust, of covetousness, of appetite, spring up to bear bitter fruit for generations. We who remember the national disgraces of Tulsa, of Elaine, of Herrin, of Harrison, need no telling.

So, against all forms of mob rule Mark Twain was strongly set. Because of that attitude, we have one of the finest passages in his "Adventures of Huckleberry Finn"—I refer to the twenty-first and twenty-second chapters in which he gives a DeFoe-like picture of mob insanity and mob cowardice, the Colonel Sherburn incident. It cannot be quoted here but should certainly be read.

To return to Mark Twain's views as ex-

pressed in his letters or lynchings and ruler-murder:

"No ruler is ever slain but the tremendous details of it are ravenously devoured by a hundred thousand men whose minds dwell, unaware, near the temporary-insanity frontier—and over they go, now! There is a day—two days—three—during which no ruler would be safe from perhaps the half of them; and there is a single moment wherein he would not be safe from any of them, no doubt. It may take this present shooting case six months to breed another ruler-tragedy, but it will breed it. (It did. The Roosevelt shooting. C. J. F.) There is at least one mind somewhere which will brood and decay itself to the killing point and produce that tragedy.

"Every negro burned at the stake unsettles the excitable brain of another one—I mean the inflaming details of his crime, and the lurid theatricality of his exit do it—and the duplicate crime follows, and that begets a repetition and that another one—and so on. Every lynching account unsettles the brain of another set of excitable white men, and lights another pyre—hundred and fifteen lynchings last year, a hundred and two within eight months of this year; in ten years this will be a habit on these terms.

"Yes, the wild talk you see in the papers! And from men who are sane when not upset by overwhelming excitement. A U. S. Senator—Cullom—wants this Buffalo criminal lynched! It would breed another lynching—of men who are not dreaming of committing murders, now, and will commit none if Cullom will keep quiet and not provide the exciting cause. And a District Attorney wants a law which shall punish with death *attempts* upon a President's life—this, mind you, as a deterrent. It would have no effect—or the opposite one. The lunatic's mind-space is *all* occupied, as mine was, with the matter in hand; there is no room in it for reflections on what may happen to *him*. That comes after the crime. It is the *noise* the attempt would make in the world that would breed the subsequent attempts by unsettling the rickety minds of men who envy the

criminal his vast notoriety—his obscure name tongued by stupendous kings and emperors—his picture printed everywhere; the trivalist details of his movements, what he eats, what he drinks, how he sleeps, what he says, cabled abroad over the whole world at cost of fifty thousand dollars a day—and he only a lowly shoemaker yesterday! like the assassin of the President of France—in debt to his landlady and insulted by her—and today she is proud to be able to say that she knew him 'as familiarly as you know your own brother,' and glad to stand till she drops and pour out columns and pages of her grandeur and her happiness upon the eager interviewer. Nothing will check the lynchings and ruler-murder but absolute silence—and absence of pow-wow about them. How are you going to manage that? By gagging every witness and jamming him into a dungeon for life; by abolishing all newspapers; by exterminating all newspaper men; by extinguishing God's most elegant invention, the Human Race."

A remarkable letter, that, among many remarkable letters. And it shows the man in his true light, not, be it said, as a funny man, but as a man of most intense seriousness and one who might be expected to point out in the plainest way, and using uninvolved language, those things that he found to be wrong and stupid in our civilization. Of course, there was laughter in him, but the laughter is, after all, a by-product, or the megaphone used to scatter his message. What Mark Twain really was, was thinker—social reformer with a strong sense of cosmic humor—man full of hatred of injustice—man full of sympathy with suffering—man intolerant of oppression. Call him philanthropist if you will, but philanthropist of the head and not of the heart. He laughed because he was a follower of the laughing philosopher and there was no malice in his mirth,

nor yet was it the laughter of triumph. Rather it was like the laughter of the gods; laughter in which there was pity. He was stirred to laughter at the paradox of man the heir of the ages and the ruler of the world, the master of his fate and designer of his destiny, acting on occasion like a yahoo.

What we take as fun in Mark Twain, is really the seeing of ourselves in our true colors. Like George Ade, whom the gods preserve, he shows us ourselves. We read and laugh just as we laugh at the tremendous comicalities of our near cousin, the monkey. With eyes opened, we see the incongruities in our own conduct.

Consider the character Tom Sawyer meeting a strange boy who is going his way, quietly enough, in the village street. There is not the slightest cause for quarrel, but Tom Sawyer is Every boy—a creature illogical, mischievous, bullying, overbearing and envious. He is a liar and a thief and lazy to the backbone and his brightest exploit is the playing of a part similar to that of the biblical Joseph in Egypt. The newcomer was a stranger, and that was enough. For in your isolated country towns, every newcomer is a foreigner and therefore as much an object of suspicion as the wanderer in some outlying settlement in Thibet. So the cry seems to run: "Here is one strange and unknown. Come, let us slay him." The spirit that animated Tom Sawyer was the spirit that animated the South Sea Islanders when they killed Captain Cook. It was the spirit that causes the herd—hounding of the man with an opinion. The stranger was not born on Petersburg soil and his ideas were not Peters-

burgan, wherefore there was instinctive aversion. The stranger seemed to belong to a separate social strata, therefore there was something akin to hatred. Perhaps in that kind of thing there is tribal memory and instinctive desire to safeguard the tribe against invasion. At any rate, in spite of centuries of training and of religious instruction, the instinct to persecute the stranger is strong in the human mind, from whatever cause it may arise. Scratch the veneer on modern man ever so slightly and you have the savage.

Again it may seem that too much strain is hung on a slight peg and that Mark Twain held no such views as are here attributed to him. Well, we get the Twain point of view in another of those remarkably frank letters to his friend Mr. Twitchell, this time under date of March 14th, 1905. He says:

“ . . . history and tradition testify that the heart is just about what it was in the beginning; it has undergone no shade of change. Its good and evil impulses and their consequences are the same today that they were in O.d Bible times, in Egyptian times, in Greek times, in Twentieth Century times. There has been no change. Meantime the brain has undergone no change. It is what is always was. There are a few good brains and a multitude of poor ones. It was so in Old Bible times and in all other times—Greek, Roman, Middle Ages and Twentieth Century. Among the savages—all the savages—the average brain is as competent as the average brain here or elsewhere. . . .”

And certainly, if all history begins, roughly speaking, about 4000 B. C. there is much show of truth in what Mark Twain says. We remember the Attic writers and speakers, Xeno-

phon, Thucydides, Lycias, Caesar's *Commentaries*, Cicero: many more and much more, and wonder with cause how they would be struck with the crudities existing today in our own towns. We think of our politicians and pinch-beck orators with their ineptitudes, the *Congressional Record*, our state legislative bodies wasting time on frivolities, our highest magistrate darkening counsel by words without meaning, and thinking, we remember Aemilius Paullus introducing a system of representative government in Macedonia, Caius Gracchus tackling the unemployment question in 123 B. C., Diocletian fixing maximum wages, Tiberius Gracchus limiting the size of landed estates to check the gradual disappearance of the peasant proprietor. Or we pat ourselves on the backs with pride because we have adding machines and an accountant will walk four steps and use material and time to add

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which I have seen done, but meanwhile we talk of the dark ages, forgetting Thales, Plato, Pythagoras, Eudoxus, Euclid, Aristotle, Archimedes. Certainly, Mark Twain was right and there have always been good brains and a multitude of poor ones, and the heart is just about what it was in the beginning.

Into the mouth of his character Satan, in "The Mysterious Stranger," Mark Twain puts his views as to the illusion of progress. "Cain did his murder with a club; the Hebrews did

their murders with javelin and sword; the Greeks and Romans added protective armor and the fine arts of military organization and generalship; the Christian has added guns and gunpowder; a few centuries from now he will have so greatly improved the deadly effectiveness of his weapons of slaughter that all men will confess that without Christian civilization war must have remained a poor and trifling thing to the end of time." And again: "In five or six thousand years five or six high civilizations have risen, flourished, commanded the wonder of the world, then faded out and disappeared; and not one of them except the latest ever invented any sweeping and adequate way to kill people. They all did their best—to kill being the chiefest ambition of the human race and the earliest incident in its history—but only the Christian civilization has scored a triumph to be proud of. Two or three centuries from now it will be recognized that all the competent killers are Christians; then the pagan world will go to school to the Christian—not to acquire his religion, but his guns. The Turk and the Chinaman will buy those to kill missionaries and converts with."

In other words, Mark Twain denounced, not one nation, not one particular people, but the whole Christianity-professing world as the greatest Vandals of all time, and the only point in which he was at fault was that he did not go far enough—did not see the use of poison gas, did not see on all hands organized hate, did not see the invasion of the sky by men with murder-dealing engines, for the sky was inviolate when he wrote that.

But what he did know was that there was a counsel of perfection, a seventh-day reiteration by professing Christians that man should not, or could not serve God and Mammon, and that potent things had been said about rich men and camels and needle's eyes; but meanwhile, I quote a letter again, under date of 1905, "Money is the supreme ideal—all others take tenth place. . . . Money lust has always existed, but not in the history of the world was it ever a craze, a madness, until your time and mine. This lust has rotted these nations; it has made them hard, sordid, ungentle, dishonest, oppressive."

Let puritanical pietists and idealists resent it as they will, here is the real, outspoken, honest Twain releasing his soul. He sees America professing the Christian ideal but hugging to its soul the pagan ideal that finds satisfaction in appropriation, in the attainment of goods and worldly power. Of course he has here met Nietzsche on common ground—the Nietzsche who declared that "the ego's desire of appropriation is boundless." And so it is, and because it is, the great blond beast does ravage the world, and that ravaging is war.

So we return to Mark Twain's "The Mysterious Stranger" and find Satan again setting his mimic stage with endless procession of nations, with raging seas of blood, with battle smoke and glinted flags and mighty guns. Then Satan says:

" . . . What does it amount to? Nothing at all. You gain nothing; you always come out where you went in. For a million years the race has gone on monotonously propagating itself and monotonously re-performing this dull nonsense—

to what end? No wisdom can guess! Who gets a profit out of it? Nobody but a parcel of usurping little monarchs and nobilities who despise you; you would feel defiled if you touched them; would shut the door in your face if you proposed to call; whom you slave for, fight for, die for, and are not ashamed of it but proud; whose existence is a perpetual insult to you and you are afraid to resent it; who are mendicants supported by your alms, yet assume toward you the airs of benefactor toward beggar; who address you in the language of master to slave and are answered in the language of slave to masters; who are worshipped by you with your mouth, while in your heart—if you have one—you despise yourself for it. . . .”

The spirit of that passage, I say, is magnificent. There is the true patriotism, the fearless spokesman standing for those principles which men in authority have so weakly forsaken. In his denunciation of war Mark Twain is sturdy in real and not spurious Americanism. And he is right, eminently right. For millions have died and many more millions have suffered for the “usurping little monarchs” and the no less contemptible elected persons with their never ending audacity. And the gospel of Peace on earth *is* but idle talk, and the ego’s desire of appropriation *is* boundless. And the sooner we realize it the better, for as things go a dead and ruined planet is our goal.

No matter where we touch Mark Twain, we find a man bent on examining things for himself; looking clear-eyed on the world about him and casting aside authority for independent verification. Sometimes I think that he strove to be the man that Herbert Spencer pictured when he wrote his “Science of Sociology”—the man who would free his mind from bias political, bias patriotic, bias emotional, bias edu-

cational and bias religious. Taboos did not exist for him. Was something said to be sacred and not to be touched with profane hands, then he, like the character in Lord Dunsany's play, marched up to it, tore aside the veil and revealed the nothingness that was there. Like some Hereward with mighty arm and unfearing heart he slew right and left. Read Tom Sawyer to see the scorn with which he flayed the sentimentalists and pretenders, those that "showed off" with little displays of insect authority in the village church — the whining preacher, the fussing Sunday school superintendent, the "best" people of the place, the prize scholar who rattled off his Bible verses as the Thibetian reels his praying wheel. Read "The Innocents Abroad" to see the well-merited contumely he heaps upon the pretenders who drop bottomless buckets into empty wells as it were, with their feigned admiration of old masters which they in no wise understand—to see the gentle fun poked at those who pretend to find merit in things they see because they are expected to find them meritorious; the relics, the statutes, the Turkish coffee, the buildings. Read the "Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" to fall in love with the simple, honest negro Jim and laugh with Twain at the ineffable nonsense of what goes by the name of the southern attitude towards the negro—laugh at the mawkish sentimentality that led a family to clutter up a room with the useless belongings of the dead Emmeline Grangerford—laugh at the pitiful lynching mob "that don't fight with courage that's born in 'em, but with courage that's borrowed from their mass"—laugh at the in-

sanity of the people who allow themselves to be bamboozled by revivalists and hard-shell Baptists and Holy Rollers. Read "A Tramp Abroad" to see a modern Swift stripping the humbug from the strutting detective with his fake sapience—would that the world could read "The Stolen White Elephant" and banish forever its paid government detectives and *agents provocateurs*, creators of the mysteries that they pretend to unravel, latter-day witch-finders as they are, manufacturing the thing that they discover. Or mark this significant remark from "The \$30,000 Bequest": "It was a cold day when she didn't ship a cargo of missionaries to persuade unreflecting Chinamen to trade off twenty-four carat Confucianism for counterfeit Christianity." Or enjoy the fun that he has with the sentimentalists in his "Last Words of Great Men"; with the lyceum lecturers in "The Approaching Epidemic," with free verse jugglers in "A Memory." As for the professional moralists, the Frank Crane-Samuel Smiles stripe of fellow, the all-is-best-in-this-best-of-all-possible-words men, for them I offer the little story "Edward Mills and George Benton" with its optimistic and trustful family of Brants always mouthing the eternal "Be pure, honest, sober, industrious, and considerate of others, and success in life is assured." And if you will but read "The Prince and the Pauper" with bright eye and open mind, closing the book at page 109 for a few moments, to think and digest and reflect on the folly of my Lord This telling Duke That to notify Earl the Other to have brought some little thing for the use of the exalted personage, you

will have gained something worth while. For, mark you, this own republic of free and independent men is full of sycophants no less servile than those pictured by Twain in the mediæval court. In all the civilized world no people are more prone to revel in empty forms than those in these United States. We delight in titles and in authority and in ritual. We band ourselves into lodges and secret societies to genuflect and make obeisance. For a brief hour each week the butcher, the baker and the candlestick-maker may sit exalted, saluted as Grand Potentate, Most Excellent Commander, Most Worshipful. We bestow titles no less fantastic than those bestowed on eastern rulers. In ten thousand and twice ten thousand hot lodge-rooms men adorn themselves in ridiculous robes, don fantastic headpieces, and trick themselves out with silly trappings and march and wind about little wooden stands singing doggerel verses to the tune of Auld Lang Syne. Night after night the game is being played of some Most Exalted giving a message to the man sitting at his right hand who advances three steps and repeats it to some tin spear-bearing youth, who marches with it to an inner door-keeper, who whispers it through a door to an outer door-keeper. Given a town of a thousand and you have a half dozen lodges and in each lodge the proper official to open the big Bible, the proper official to knock three times with a gavel, the proper official to announce that a candidate is in waiting, the proper official to don a purple and crimson robe, the proper official to carry a tin sword. And when we have created all the illustrious men that we

can, when all possibilities are exhausted, we solve the difficulty by starting new lodges. From Masons and Woodmen and Odd Fellows, and Knights of Pythias, and of Columbus, and Red Men, and Maccabees, we invade the animal world to form associations of Moose, of Elk, of Owls, of Bears, of Lions. We climb higher with more degrees and we expand with side degrees and we add excrescences with auxiliaries for women and children.

In the same book, "The Prince and the Pauper," we read with amused amazement of the sentencing of those accused of witcheries and in another place of a bill of attainder having been passed against a prisoner without trial or evidence and the prisoner being duly executed. But Mark Twain's idea that progress is, after all, something very much like an illusion, holds good here as well. We, too, have sentencing and executing without trial. I recall that night of July, 1921, when three cars loaded with men wearing white robes and hoods, supported by other cars similarly filled, drove up to that cafe in Pensacola, Florida. For England in her darkest days of ignorance had no such invisible terror as the Ku Klux Klan. The only difference is that while in the days of which Twain wrote, men and women were branded, were burned at the stake, were tarred and beaten in the name of the law, with us, today, there are brandings, and lynchings, and burnings, and tarrings, and beatings in the name of a spurious Americanism. But whereas, in the days of which Twain wrote, the executioners did their work openly

and in the light of day, in our time the later atrocities are often committed in the dark of night by masked and hooded anonymities. The one was capable of being, and was, eventually changed—the other is the work of hidden terrorists who wreak violence in the name of virtue—and officialdom connives. Again I say, Mark Twain spoke wisely when he said that there is no historical evidence of net progress. True, the “name of Héñry VIII brought a shiver, and suggested an ogre whose nostrils breathed destruction and whose hand dealt scourgings and death” to quote Mark Twain, but the passage reads very *apropos* if we change the “Henry VIII” to “Imperial Wizard” who, in the ridiculous language of the Kloran, the private bible of the K.K.K., is “Emperor of the Invisible Kingdom: a wise man: a wonder worker, having power to charm and control.”

Progress an Illusion! There is food for much thought in the idea, and I do not know of anything written better calculated on which to base an argument than Mark Twain’s account of the Sherburn incident in “Huckleberry Finn” and his many accounts of mob action in “The Prince and the Pauper.” In the noteworthy letter to Mr. Twitchell, Twain argued that at the rate things were moving, lynching would become a national habit. I hold that the prophecy has almost justified itself. The figures published by the American Civil Liberties Union in a recent pamphlet seem to prove it. “One hundred and fifteen lynchings in a year,” writes Mark Twain seventeen years ago, and now, consider this:

| | TOTAL | —WHITES— | | —NEGROES— | |
|---------------|-------|----------|-------|-----------|-------|
| | | Men | Women | Men | Women |
| Lynched | 102 | 33 | | 69 | |
| Tarred | 63 | 60 | 1 | 2 | |
| Flogged | 167 | 122 | 4 | 39 | 2 |
| Totals | 332 | 215 | 5 | 110 | 2 |

In addition:

Deportations, 460.

Killed in riots, 70 to 90.

Record for the Last Six Months of 1922.

The record for the six months from July 1st to December 31, 1922, shows a greater number of cases than in any similar period in the two years. There were 103 cases of lynching, tarring and feathering or flogging. *Over two-thirds of the victims were white men and women. Five of them were women who were tarred or flogged.*

Among the 32 Negroes in the record, 20 were lynched. When a mob goes after a Negro, in most cases it does not stop short of death. Of the 27 persons lynched in this period, 7 were white men. Twenty-four of the victims were tarred and feathered, and 52 flogged. Thirteen of the 103 outrages were definitely fixed by the newspaper reports on the Ku Klux Klan, and 40 more were attributed to masked mobs.

That is a two-year record and seems to show that the habit has been formed as Mark Twain feared it would be.

So we come, reading honestly and following straightly, to the irreverent Mark Twain, the much-apologized-for Twain, the Twain wilfully misunderstood by those of priggish mind who would make unwholesome sentimentalists out of every man.

Like Percy Bysshe Shelley, Mark Twain was an incorrigible thinker. He was forever trying, the best he knew how, to get down to

fundamentals. He was all for straight thinking, for lucidity, for clearness, for intellectual honesty, following a thought wheresoever it led. If he built a structure, it would be on ascertained facts and not on inferences. When he wrote, he wrote while zealously and ardently trying to set down a viewpoint—but *his* viewpoint and not the collected opinions of other men. Never would he be an artificial compound of conformity. His was the expository faculty and he would have nothing to do with the cold and sorry light of the reflection of a reflection of a reflection, that compilation of dead issues so beloved by the genus professor. Not for him any vortex of thought in which his head would whirl like the dancing atoms of the nebulous universe. Not for him any wild vagaries. So, properly anxious to find where he stood, he essayed to define what constitutes the inner life of man, the quintessence of existence.

It would be possible to fill this book with extracts showing his position, but of many promising and interesting pages, I choose to take part of a letter written to the Rev. J. H. Twitchell, in February, 1902. It was written after reading "Freedom of the Will," by old Jonathan Edwards, a man of blazing earnestness. Says Twain of the book:

"I wallowed and reeked with Jonathan in his insane debauch; rose immediately refreshed and fine at 10 this morning, but with a strange and haunting sense of having been on a three days' tear with a drunken lunatic. It is years since I have known these sensations. All through the book is the glare of a resplendent intellect gone mad—a

marvelous spectacle. No, not *all* through the book—the drunk does not come on till the last third, where what I take to be Calvinism and its God begins to show up and shine red and hideous in the glow from the fires of hell, their only right and proper adornment. By God, I was ashamed to be in such company!

“Jonathan seems to hold (as against the Arminian position) that the Man (of his Soul or his Will) never creates an impulse itself but is moved to action by an impulse *back* of it. That’s sound! Also, that of two or more things offered it, it infallibly chooses the one which for the moment is most *pleasing* to ITSELF. *Perfectly* correct! An immense admission for a man not otherwise sane.

“Up to that point he could have written chapters III and IV of my suppressed Gospel. But there we seem to separate. He seems to concede the indisputable and unshakable dominion of Motive and Necessity (call them what he may these are *exterior* forces and not under the man’s authority, guidance or even suggestion)—then he suddenly flies the logic track and (to all seeming) makes the *man* and not these exterior forces responsible to God for the man’s thoughts, words and acts. It is frank insanity.

“I think when he concedes the autocratic dominion of Motive and Necessity he grants a *third* exposition of mine—that a man’s mind is a mere machine—an *automatic* machine—which is handled entirely from the *outside*, the man himself furnishing it absolutely nothing; not an ounce of its fuel, and not so much as a bare suggestion to that exterior engineer as to what the machine shall do, nor *how* it shall do it nor *when*.

“After that concession it was time for him to get alarmed and *shirk*—for he was pointing straight for the only rational and possible next station on *that* piece of road; the irresponsibility of man to God.

“And so he shirked. Shirked and arrived at this handsome result: Man is commanded to do so and so.

It has been ordained from the beginning of time that some men *shan’t* and others *can’t*.

These are to be blamed; let them be damned. . .”

That is the salient part of the letter. Now for Mark Twain, the moralist in disguise, the philosopher wearing the garb of the humorist, as he opposes Edwards. We come to his "Suppressed Gospel," his "What Is Man?"—one of the most stimulating pieces of writing of our time. I can but indicate the main highway, for the thing itself cannot be boiled down, must not be emasculated and is quite impossible of summary.

The final goal at which he arrives is this: All depends upon temperament. That accounts for a man's life, his belief, his religion, his conduct, his politics, his very life's history: and man's temperament is inborn—if he is born with an unhappy temperament, nothing can make him happy, and if he is born with a happy temperament nothing can make him unhappy.

Locking back along the traversed highroad, we see certain mile-posts thus:

Temperament decides the preferences of a man—the ideals he will follow: the education he will seek: the appetites he will work to gratify.

Man is a machine—a combination of mechanisms acting in accordance with the desires of his inner man, his Me, his Master Passion.

There is no Free Will, but there is Free Choice. That is, "the mind can freely select, choose, point out the right and just way—its function stops there. It can go no further in the matter. It has no authority to say that the right one shall be acted upon and the wrong one discarded." That last authority is

in "the machine which stands for him. In his born disposition and the character which has been built around it by training and environment."

The mind is independent of the man. He has no control over it; it does as it pleases. It will take up a subject in spite of him; it will stick to it in spite of him; it will throw it aside in spite of him. It is entirely independent of him.

A parenthetical remark is best here to show Mark Twain's method. In "What Is Man," the arguing character called Old Man, which is Twain himself, occupies himself with the idea of the independent mind—the sub-conscious mind as we would call it today. "The mind," he says, "is quite independent. It is master. You have nothing to do with it. It is so apart from you that it can conduct its affairs, sing its songs, play its chess, weave its complex and ingeniously-constructed dreams while you sleep. It has no use for your help, no use for your guidance, and never uses either, whether you be asleep or awake." Now notice how Mark Twain has worked out this theme of the independent mind. Or, perhaps the idea of the independent mind grew out of the observed fact. Anyway, it does not much matter. But the example exists, and, whereas most men would have said "for instance" and dismissed the matter in a few unconvincing words, Mark Twain makes us realize the truth of what he has in mind in his sketch, "Punch, Brothers, Punch," with its haunting jingle:

Conductor when you receive a fare
Punch in the presence of the passengere!
A blue trip slip for an eight cent fare,
A buff trip slip for a six cent fare,
A pink trip slip for a three cent fare,
Punch in the presence of the passengere!

Punch, brothers! Punch with care!

Punch in the presence of the passengere!

(The man who will read that aloud three times will need no further proof that the mind will sing its song independently of the man.)

So back to the philosophical Twain, still considering his "What Is Man." There is, at bottom, he holds, selfish motive, and what men do, in the long run, is that which will add to their own comfort and contentment. For the moralist there is this admonition: Diligently train your ideals upward and still upward toward a summit where you will find your chiefest pleasure in conduct which, while contenting you, will be sure to confer benefits upon your neighbor and the community. That, Mark Twain holds, is the core of the teaching of all religions, the center of all the great gospels, but the oddity comes in that the religions and the gospels have overlooked the fact that the requirement of the Me should be stated first.

As might be expected, for all that kind of thing Mark Twain did not go unchallenged. Men of diseased fancy and distorted imagination saw in Twain a danger. Here and there sporadic attempts had been made to bar the book "Tom Sawyer" and its fellow, "Huckleberry Finn," from libraries. Little souls, almost beneath contempt, accused him of irrev-

erence. I do not mean to say that the charge of irreverence was brought of a sudden and in view of any particular piece of writing, but rather that it was suspected that there was a mild flavor of irreverence about almost everything that Twain wrote. He would not consider so many, many things holy. There was so much that he laughed to scorn: the village Sunday school superintendent, the boy who learned hundreds of Bible texts, the Christian Scientists who glorified Mrs. Eddy, the dyed-in-the-wool Shakespeareans, relic hunters, admirers of the things supposed to be admired on general principles, Wagnerites, people who cast their eyes heavenwards and quoted the "last words" of notabilities, sycophantic Americans who toadied to the rich, the mean spirits in ten thousand little Girards and Fayettevilles who held that words and not deeds—that is what is called "boosting" instead of attention to one's business was civic virtue, disreputable journalists who polluted the home with their sheets, Theodore Roosevelt the war lord of Washington, cock-sure theologians and hide-bound "scientific" pedants, sentimentalist who made of death a festival in black, anarchists of the deed, professors forever quoting other professors, get-rich-quick men, get-wise-quick men, institutional reformers. The list of things that he laughed at is long, very long. And each representative, each exponent of the thing punctured, writhed. To Twain, it was said, nothing was sacred. He was an iconoclast, an irreverent fellow.

In his letters there is reference here and

there to the general charge and one senses the leaven working. It is easy to see that the philosopher will have something to say some day on his own irreverent attitude. Then it came with a rush, in the twelfth section of a masterly essay on the Bacon-Shakespeare question and the world was the richer.

"When a thing is sacred to me," he says, "it is impossible for me to be irreverent toward it. I cannot call to mind a single instance where I have been irreverent, except toward the things which were sacred to other people. Am I in the right? I think so. But I ask no one to take my unsupported word; no, look at the dictionary; let the dictionary decide. Here is the definition:

Irreverence. The quality or inclination of irreverence toward God and sacred things.

"What does the Hindu say? He says it is correct. He says irreverence is lack of respect for Vishnu, and Brahma, and Chrishna, and his other gods, and for his sacred cattle, and for his temples and the things within them. He indorses the definition, you see; and there are 300,000,000 Hindus and their equivalents back of him.

"The dictionary had the acute idea that by using the capital G it could restrict irreverence for *our* Diety and our sacred things, but that ingenious and rather sly idea miscarried; for by the simple process of spelling *his* dieties with capitals the Hindu confiscates the definition and restricts it to his own sects, thus making it clearly compulsory upon us to revere *his* gods and *his* sacred things, and nobody's else. We can't say a word, for he has our dictionary at his back, and his decision is final.

"This law, reduced to its simplest terms is this;

- (1) Whatever is sacred to the Christian must be held in reverence by everybody else.
- (2) Whatever is sacred to the Hindu must be held in reverence by everybody else.
- (3) Therefore, by consequence, logically and indisputably, whatever is sacred to *me* must be held in reverence by everybody else.

"Now then, what aggravates me is that these troglodytes and muscovites and bandoleers and buccaneers are *also* trying to crowd in and share the benefit of the law and compel everybody to revere their Shakespeare and hold him sacred. We can't have that: there's enough of such already. If you go on widening and spreading and inflating the privilege, it will presently come to be conceded that such man's sacred things are the only ones and the rest of the human race will have to be humbly reverent toward them or suffer for it. That can surely happen and when it happens the word Irreverence will be regarded as the most meaningless, and foolish, and self-conceited, and insolent, and impudent, and dictatorial word in the language. And people will say: 'Whose business is it what gods I worship and what things I hold sacred? Who has the right to dictate to my conscience, and where did he get that right?'

"It would be better if the privilege were limited to me alone. I think so because I am the only sect that knows how to employ it gently, kindly, charitably, dispassionately. The Catholic Church says the most irreverent things about matters which are sacred to the Protestants, and the Protestant Church retorts in kind about the confessional and other matters which Catholics hold sacred; then both of them turn upon Thomas Paine and charge *him* with irreverence. This is all unfortunate, because it makes it difficult for students equipped with only a low grade of mentality to find out what irreverence really is."

There's logic there and common sense, too. But human nature is human nature and, as Mill pointed out, there is no record of any party possessing power without abusing it.

So far as I know, the irreverent charge was last said against Mark Twain by the United States Government, or by some busy-body acting in its name. My information comes from Stuart X, then of Washington and now of California, another highly irreverent man. In

a letter to me dated July 18th, 1923, received two days ago, he says: "Clemens' 'Mysterious Stranger' is a Fairy Tale—and, at the same time, the life-history of His now passing race—deeply philosophic. I wrote Dean Howells at the time that if he had known what it really was (and) if Clemens' had not camouflaged it by laying the scene in Austria, Harper's would never have published it. And even so it was suspect—suppressed at the Congressional and all other libraries during the war, and the book itself reported 'out of print.' Our war-gods were afraid it might lessen the 'morality' of our people, which, while conscripted, we call 'the morale.'"

A vivid personality, this Mark Twain: an outspoken man whose career was eminently successful. Like George Bernard Shaw he said things which, had he not said them with a smile and a shrug, might have landed him in difficulties. Yet he did not dare, somehow, to publish all that he wrote. He hesitated about the appearance of "The Mysterious Stranger" and "What Is Man" was his suppressed gospel. The "Life History of a Microbe" has not yet seen the light of print so far as I know, and his clever brochure, "A Fireside Conversation in the Days of Queen Elizabeth" was privately printed and is extremely rare.

THE LIFE OF THE MAN

It may, possibly, be overlooked that Mark Twain wrote his own biography up to a certain point. Those accustomed to overmuch dwelling on matters introspective may find the facts bare to severity. Still, viewed in retrospect, Mark Twain found the record sufficient.

The biography is scattered here and there; now it is a sketch showing sharply some incident in his boyhood, like a photograph trimmed of unnecessary and distracting matter. Again there is an account of his boyhood town of Hannibal, Missouri. Sometimes there is a swift reference to something hidden or half forgotten, like the account of his attempt to shoot a man. Then again we get pictures of those with whom he had come into contact—Bixby for instance.

Some biographers, in the lofty manner of writers seeking to idealize their subject, have said that the father of Samuel Langhorne Clemens was one Judge John Marshall Clemens. Mark Twain himself, in the fourth chapter of his "Life on the Mississippi" says "My father was a justice of the peace, and I supposed he possessed the power of life and death over all men and could hang anybody that offended him."

The child who became Mark Twain was born in Florida, Missouri, on November 30th, 1835, but he has chosen to tell us but little of his early days. It is Hannibal, Mo., that interests him—the place where his boyhood was spent and from which at last he ran away. "I said I

would never come home again till I was a pilot and could come in glory." The river-love was strong upon him and "I wanted to be a cabin-boy, so that I could come out with a white apron on and shake a table cloth over the side, where all my old comrades could see me; later, I thought I would rather be the deck hand who stood on the end of the stage plank with the coil of rope in his hand, because he was particularly conspicuous."

The little river town photographed itself deeply upon his memory. There is a splendid picture of:

"The white town drowsing in the sunshine of a summer's morning; the streets empty, or pretty nearly so; one or two clerks sitting in front of the Water Street stores, with their splint-bottomed chairs tilted back against the wall, chins on breasts, hats slouched over their faces, asleep—with shingle-shavings enough around to show what broke them down; a sow and a litter of pigs loafing along the sidewalk, doing a good business in watermelon rinds and seeds; two or three lonely little freight piles scattered about the 'levee'; a pile of 'skids' on the slope of the stone-paved wharf, and the fragrant town drunkard asleep in the shadow of them; two or three wood flats at the head of the wharf, but nobody to listen to the peaceful lappings of the wavelets against them; the great Mississippi, the majestic, the magnificent Mississippi, rolling its mile-wide tide along, shining in the sun; the dense forest away on the other side; the 'point' above the town, and the 'point' below, bounding the river-glimpse and turning it into a sort of sea, and withal a very still and brilliant and lonely one. Presently a film of dark smoke appears above one of those remote 'points'; instantly a negro drayman, famous for his quick eye and prodigious voice, lifts up the cry, 'S-t-e-a-m-boat a-comin'!' and the scene changes. The town drunkard stirs, the clerks wake up, a furious clatter of drays follows; every house and store pours

out a human contribution and all in a twinkling the dead town is alive and moving. Drays, carts, men, boys, all go hurrying from many quarters to a common center, the wharf. Assembled there, the people fasten their eyes upon the coming boat as upon a wonder they are seeing for the first time. And the boat is rather a handsome sight, too. She is long and sharp and trim and pretty; she has two tall, fancy-topped chimneys, with a gold gilded device of some kind swung between them; a fanciful pilot-house, all glassed and 'gingerbread,' perched on top of the 'texas' deck behind them; the paddle-boxes are gorgeous with a picture or with gilded rays above the boat's name: the boiler deck, the hurricane deck, the texas-deck are fenced and ornamented with clean white railings, there is a flag gallantly flying from the jack-staff; the furnace doors are open and the fires glaring bravely; the upper decks are black with passengers; the captain stands by the big bell, calm, imposing, the envy of all: great volumes of the blackest smoke are rolling and tumbling out of the chimneys—a husbanded grandeur created with a bit of pitch just before arriving at a town; the crew are grouped on the forecastle; the broad stage is run far out over the port bow, and an envied deck-hand stands picturesquely on the end of it with a coil of rope in his hand; the pent steam is screaming through the gauge-cocks; the captain lifts his hand, a bell rings, the wheels stop; then they turn back, churning the water to foam, and the steamer is at rest. Then such a scramble as there is to get aboard, and to get ashore, and to take in freight and to discharge freight, all at one and the same time; and such a yelling and cursing as the mates facilitate it with! Ten minutes later the steamer is underway again, with no flag on the jack-staff and no black smoke issuing from the chimneys. After ten minutes more the town is dead again, and the town drunkard asleep by the skids once more."

So in the swiftest manner Mark Twain takes us flying over the years, leaping from youth to the year 1875. Thus:

"In due course I got my license. I was a pilot now full fledged. I dropped into casual employ-

ments; no misfortunes resulting, intermittent work gave place to steady and protracted engagements. Time drifted smoothly and prosperously on, and I supposed—and hoped—that I was going to follow the river the rest of my days, and die at the wheel when my mission was ended. But by and by the war came, commerce was suspended, my occupation was gone.

“I had to seek another livelihood. So I became a silver miner in Nevada; next, a newspaper reporter; next, a gold miner in California; next a reporter in San Francisco; next, a special correspondent in the Sandwich Islands; next, a roving correspondent in Europe and the East; next, an instructional torch-bearer on the lecture platform; and finally, I became a scribbler of books, and an immovable fixture in the other rocks of New England.

“In so few words have I disposed of the twenty-one slow drifting years that have come and gone since I last looked from the windows of the pilot-house.”

There are a few letters on record, some written to his mother, which give impressions of frontier life and there is caught here and there, a sign of the writer that is to be. But, for the most part the early letters are ordinary. Mark Twain came to his heritage later. In “*Roughing It*” there are better pictures. True, he had contributed a few articles to newspapers while he was in Carson City, but the humor was rough and strained. It was Artemus Ward who first suspected literary ability in Mark Twain.

To the east, to the office of the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* and to *Vanity Fair* in New York there had drifted copies of Californian papers and the contributions signed “Mark Twain” stood out prominently. Artemus Ward (Charles Farrar Browne) of the *Plain Dealer*, a genial

fellow with a strong sense of cosmic humor, read and found merit and promise in the Twain work. Sitting in his comfortless room facing Lake Erie, his furniture a shaky table and a couple of rickety chairs, the picture of western life that he conjured up attracted him. There were men there, it seemed; men who refused to take life seriously, men who laughed at care and valued friendship and for whom the dollar was not all. There was Josh Billings and Bret Harte and Dan de Quille and others of similar stripe. So Artemus Ward severed his newspaper connections and went on the lecture platform, and, in California where gold was plentiful he did well. Reaching Nevada, he lost no time in seeking out Mark Twain and his associates, and in Virginia City, for three weeks, there were Rabelaisian times, mighty drinkings and mighty laughings, and if there were any manuals of devotion in camp, they were kept on the rear shelves. For those that were there gathered were young, and full of a coarse energy, and life for them was all gold and purple. So there was good nature and generosity, extravagance and affection, and none of the snuffling seriousness of conventionality, and, taking it by and large, they had a red-blooded, rip-roaring time. They were days when some sturdy souls must have looked down over the ramparts of Valhalla wishing that they were on earth again—Fielding, Chaucer and Swift, for instance, and Smollett, and Bobbie Burns, and Moliere, and the gay dogs who flung gold about in the days of Charles II. There is an echo of that time in a letter which

Artemus Ward wrote to Mark Twain, but Mark's letter in reply has vanished. Here it is:

Austin, Jan. 1st, 1864.

My dearest Love:

I arrived here yesterday a. m. at 2 o'clock. It is a wild untamable place, full of lion hearted boys. I speak tonight. See small bills.

Why did you not go with me and save me that night? I mean the night I left you after that dinner party. I went and got drunker, beating, I may say, Alexander the Great, in his most drinkinist days, and I blackened my face at the Melodeon, and made a gibbering, idiotic speech. God-dam it! I suppose the Union will have it. But let it go. I shall always remember Virginia as a bright spot in my existence, as all others must or rather cannot be, as it were.

Love to Jo Goodman and Dan. I shall write soon, a powerfully convincing note to my friends of the Mercury. Your notice, by the way, did much good here, as it doubtlessly will elsewhere. The miscreants of the Union will be battered in the snout if they ever dare pollute this rapidly rising city with their loathsome presence.

Some of the finest intellects in the world have been blunted by liquor.

Do not, sir—do not flatter yourself that you are the only chastely humorous writer onto the Pacific slopes.

Good bye old boy—and God bless you! The matter of which I spoke to you so earnestly shall be just as earnestly attended to—and again with very many warm regards for Jo and Dan, and regards to many of the good friends we met,

I am Faithfully, gratefully yours,

ARTEMUS WARD.

Of that letter Albert Bigelow Paine, who edited Mark Twain's correspondence, has this to say: "The *Union*, which Ward mentions, was the rival Virginia City paper: the *Mercury* was the *New York Sunday Mercury*, to which he had urged Twain to contribute."

There is on record another Ward letter to Twain, dated:

Salt Lake City, Jan. 21st, 1864.

My dear Mark:

I have been dangerously ill for the past two weeks here, of congestive fever. Very grave fears were for a time entertained of my recovery, but happily the malady is gone, though leaving me very, very weak. I hope to be able to resume my journey in a week or so. I think I shall speak in the theater here, which is one of the finest establishments of its kind in America.

The Saints have been wonderfully kind to me. I could not have been better or more tenderly nursed at home—God bless them!

I am still exceedingly weak—can't write any more. Love to Jo and Dan and all the rest. Write me at St. Louis.

Always yours,

ARTEMUS WARD.

Don C. Seitz, in his "Life of Artemus Ward," quotes in part a communication from Mark Twain to Mr. Aldrich, giving the Twain remembrance of the session in Virginia City. It is not dressed up for art's sake, but is of Dreiserean baldness. It reads:

Scene: Private room in Barnum's restaurant.
Virginia, Nevada.

Present: Artemus Ward, Joseph T. Goodman (editor and proprietor Daily Enterprise), and Dan De Quille and myself, reporters for the same; remnants of the feast, thin and scathing, but such tautology and repetition of empty bottles everywhere visible to be offensive to the sensitive eye.

Time: 2:30 a. m.

Artemus thickly reciting a poem about a certain infant you wot of, (Ballad of Baby Bell), and interrupting himself and being interrupted every few lines by poundings on the table and shouts of "Splendid, by Shorzhe!" Finally, a long, vociferous, poundiferous and vitreous jingling of applause an-

nounces the conclusion, and then Artemus: "Let every man 'at loves his fellow-man and 'preciates a poet, 'at loves his fellow-man, stan' up—*up!* and drink health and long life to Thomas Bailey Aldrich—and drink it stan'ing!" (On all hands fervent, enthusiastic, and sincerely honest attempt to comply). Then Artemus:

"Well, consider it stan'ing, and drink it just as ye are!"

A year later, all New York was laughing at the quaint story, "The Jumping Frog," a tale which Mark Twain had heard told by a long-winded raconteur named Ben Coon. The tale was reprinted and copied and, slight thing though it was, being thought little enough of at the time by its author, yet it took England by storm and for years Mark Twain's reputation in that country rested largely upon the frog story and nothing else.

That job of special correspondent in the Sandwich Islands to which he refers, came in the year 1866 and through the *Sacramento Union*. From a letter written to his mother, we learn that he was to "ransack the islands" to "write twenty or thirty letters" and to stay there a month. With some pride he wrote that he was guest at dinner with King's Grand Chamberlain "five regular courses and five kinds of wine and one of brandy," that after dinner there were singing girls and that the colored King was a Royal Arch Mason. But it was Chance again that threw across his path an opportunity when the survivors of the *Hornet*, nineteen half starved men who had been in an open boat for forty-three days, arrived at the island of Hawaii. His account of the sufferings of the sailors appeared in the *Union* in

the issue of June 25th, 1866—a masterful piece of descriptive writing.

In that brief, succinct piece of autobiography printed a few pages back, Mark Twain carries his record on from the Sandwich Islands job to "roving correspondent in Europe and the east." But he left out an important move made in between, a move mentioned and rementioned in his book "Roughing It." For, after his Sandwich Islands' trip, he could not settle down and following the example of Artemus Ward, he went on the lecture platform. "I have lectured," he writes to Mrs. Jane Clemens, "in San Francisco, Sacramento, Marysville, Grass Valley, Nevada, You Bet, Red Dog and Virginia. I am going to talk in Carson, Gold Hill, Silver City, Dayton, Washoe, San Francisco again, and again here (Virginia City) if I have time to rehash the lecture." And he lectured from October until December, made much money, spent a few weeks in New York and, learning of a trip to Europe to be made by the steamer *Quaker City*, made his proposition to the proprietors of the *Alta-California* to go as special correspondent and his proposition was accepted.

"Innocents Abroad" was the result of the trip and the letters written to his newspapers made him famous. And why? Not only because of the descriptive writing, not only because of the humor, but chiefly because he saw things with a fresh eye and not through the medium of a guide book. There is magnificent and masterly effectiveness in his picture of the tourists in foreign cities and always he has a faculty of vision. Pierre Loti is no greater

impressionist of the pen. The amusing eccentricities and oddities of his fellow passengers are woven in with descriptions of places and notes of manners and customs in a most delightful way, and the rough-hewn philosophy of the writer constantly stimulates thought. By January, 1870, more than thirty thousand copies of the "Innocents Abroad" were sold and Mark Twain tells his publishers, "You are running it in staving, tip-top, first-class style. I never wander into any corner of the country but I find that an agent has been there before me, and many of that community have read the book . . ." So the sun of prosperity shines and the wanderer, the miner always in debt, the barefooted boy of Hannibal writes to Redpath, the impresario, under date of May 10th, 1870, that he has "a lovely wife (he married Olivia Langdon on February 2nd, 1870), a lovely house, bewitchingly furnished; a lovely carriage, and a coachman whose style and dignity are simply awe inspiring—nothing less, and I am making more money than necessary—by considerable, and therefore why crucify myself nightly on the platform."

The "Innocents Abroad," indeed, had made many things possible for him. On the day of his marriage, his publishers sent him a check for more than four thousand dollars, three months' royalty, and the book was selling well at \$3.50 a copy. As an investment he had bought an interest in the *Buffalo Express*, which he sold again. The book "Roughing It" was on the market in 1872, selling strong, and Mark Twain had invented his famous scrapbook, a clever idea involving gummed pages

which required nothing but water to use, and, as Twain said, was a moral invention, inasmuch as profanity was unnecessary when the scrap-book was in service. Then came England and London.

That was in 1873 and we have pictures of Mark Twain's delight in the city where all men meet on the common ground of intellect and achievement. We find him luxuriating in "glorious old Pepys' diary," as he tells his friend Twitchell—in the stately buildings and the old magnificent landmarks—in St. Paul's, Guildhall, the British Museum, Westminster Abbey. He looks from that window in the Langham Hotel to see "Portland Place and the crook that joins it to Regent Street" so we know that he is in the midst of things—close to where he can, and did, meet Robert Browning, the most representative poet of his age; Thomas Henry Huxley full of deep conviction that science was meant not for men of science only but for all the world; Prince Kropotkin, the anarchist, who found welcome in the big city though a fugitive from his own country and France; Sir John Millais, the painter; Charles Kingsley, novelist and hunting parson and Christian Socialist; William Morris, Turgenieff, dukes and duchesses, lords and ladies, Irish patriots, Henry Irving, members of parliament and city aldermen. There was much gaiety and little writing, but he lectured often at the Queen's Concert Rooms in Hanover Square and his subject was the old Sandwich Island talk, refurbished for the occasion. But the chief thing for which he went to England, to get material for a book, was never done. The people

moulded by the influences of Addison and Lamb and Milton and Carlyle and a hundred more, received him and his sympathies went out to them. He understood them and was conquered. For there he found room for all things, tolerance for all opinions, and, on the whole, a subtle harmony that he had not expected. The spirit of liberty was conscious of progress and of life and there was a balance between an organized aristocracy and an organic people that resulted in pleasing absence of friction.

So, day by day, Mark Twain climbed and the world was gold and gay. There was a hurried trip to New York and a hurried return to London where, for two months, he lectured under the management of Charles Dickens' former manager, George Dolby and, rich in purse and in health, he returned to Hartford in 1874, where he stayed for seventeen easy years. It was a time of great literary activity and he wrote "Tom Sawyer," "The Prince and the Pauper," "Life on the Mississippi," "Huckleberry Finn" and "A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court," the last of which, by the way, furiously annoyed Henry James, according to Ford Maddox-Hueffer.

We get glimpses of a pleasant circle at Hartford and a kind of English-like organization known as the Monday Evening Club in which a few friends met to discuss anything and everything straight from the shoulder—thinking aloud, in fact.

The peculiar relations, critical and literary, between William Dean Howells and Mark Twain merit a word. Throughout the correspondence, it is seen that Mark Twain had

the greatest opinion of Howells' literary ability, setting him high on a pedestal, referring to him, deferring to him. A letter written by Mark Twain about Tom Sawyer is strangely significant. Says Twain: "There was one expression which perhaps you overlooked. When Huck is complaining to Tom of the rigorous system in vogue at the widow's, he says the servants harass him with all manner of compulsory decencies, and he winds up by saying 'and they comb me all to hell.' (No exclamation point.) Long ago, when I read that to Mrs. Clemens, she made no comment; another time I created occasion to read that chapter to her aunt and her mother (both sensitive and loyal subjects of the kingdom of heaven, so to speak) and *they* let it pass. I was glad, for it was the most natural remark in the world for that boy to make (and he had been allowed few privileges of speech in the book) and when I saw that you, too, had let it go without protest, I was glad, and afraid too—afraid you hadn't observed it. Did you? And did you question the propriety of it? . . ." In reply, Howells said "I'd have that swearing out in an instant. I suppose I didn't notice it because the locution was so familiar to my Western sense, and so exactly the thing that Huck would say." The phrase was changed to "all to thunder" instead of "all to hell." But, it seems to me that the mere fact that the expression "all to hell" did not jar, did not shock the ladies and passed the eagle eyed Howells, that Mark Twain's use of the phrase was quite justified and that the change was

the error in fact. For Huck would have said "all to hell" and as he would have said it, in the interests of truth and of verisimilitude it should have remained so. The phrase "all to hell" was idiomatic as Huck used it and being so and a normal expression, was as permissible as sailor idiom, or negro dialect, or the talk made familiar to us by Mr. Dunne or by George Ade. But Dean Howells did not see things that way. He was of the Dickens school, excellent in its way, but a school in which the clamorous passions and the coarser accidents of life were passed with averted eyes, and he never relaxed a certain intensity of prudishness. It was a question of that temperament of which Mark Twain wrote.

On the other hand, Mark Twain was direct descendant in the literary line of Smollett and of Fielding, and with him taboos were not always effective. I think that he feared emasculated literature and the cramping of ideals. He was keen as a harrier in his desire to see things as they were.

There was one sketch that he wrote which did not appear in the *Atlantic Monthly*, *Harper's* nor in any other magazine. In a letter to his friend Howells he mentions it, saying: "When we exchange visits, I'll show you an unfinished sketch of Elizabeth's time. . ." That sketch was entitled "Fireside Conversation in the Time of Queen Elizabeth" and is not to be found in Mark Twain's collected works. John Hay had it set in type and had a few copies struck off for private circulation, and some time later, a West Point officer

had an edition de luxe of a hundred copies made. It is not by any means anything seriously pornographic. It struck me pretty much the same as did some portions of Shakespeare, or Ford, or Massinger. A few, sitting about a fireside, are portrayed as indulging in merry, bawdy talk and the things said are not different in any respect to conversation that may be heard on occasion in the smoker of a Pullman car or, now and then when the sap runs strong, in the ante-room of a lodge. Still, Mark Twain, like Robert Burns, wanted to give free rein to his fancy and the result is delightful enough. For the language of venery is of all ages and times and places, and the fact is nothing to swear over or to weep over.

We pass over a trip to Europe, the writing of a play that was not a success and the long short story called "Captain Stormfield's Visit to Heaven" which sent the pietistic puritans into spasms of rage, to notice the first honor conferred upon him when Yale made him Master of Arts in June, 1888. The high lights in the years between were a reading tour in company with George W. Cable in the winter of 1884-5 and the publication of his greatest work, "Huck Finn," as he affectionately called it. Then came the great adventure and, after seven long years of waiting and hope and expectation and doubt, the Paige typesetting machine in which Mark Twain was financially interested, was reported perfected and ready for use. "All the other wonderful inventions of the human brain sink pretty well into commonplace contrasted with this awful mechani-

cal miracle. Telephones, telegraphs, locomotives, cotton gins, sewing machines, Babbage calculators, Jacquard looms, perfecting presses. Arkwright's frames—all mere toys, simplicities! The Paige Compositor marches alone and far in the lead of human inventions." Thus enthusiastically he wrote to his brother Orion Clemens, in January, 1889; but the machine developed unexpected flaws and a few days later it was taken apart for improvements. In the fall of the same year it was reported that the typesetting machine was perfect and could do the work of ten good compositors with minute accuracy and, from a letter written to Joseph T. Goodman of Nevada, we learn that for three years and seven months, Mark Twain had been furnishing \$3,000 a month regularly! So the year closed darkly, the gloom caused by the expense of the typesetting machine and the failure to capitalize it being quite too thick to be dispelled by the success of his book, "A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court." The words of a brief letter to his publishing manager, Mr. Hall, tell the tale: "Merry Xmas to you!—and I wish to God I could have one myself before I die." It was the old, old story of the cobbler failing to stick to his last. To make matters worse, the publishing business of Charles L. Webster & Co., in which Mark Twain was deeply interested, had a tale of financial woe to tell. "I have been an author for 20 years and an ass for 55," he wrote to a friend.

Of course there was eventual bankruptcy, and Mark Twain found himself nearly a hun-

dred thousand dollars in debt. At the age of sixty, determined to pay his creditors dollar for dollar, he set to work to rebuild his fortunes with a world-wide reading tour. It was H. H. Rogers of the Standard Oil Company who saved the day, shouldering the business woes that were crushing the author, and, "I tell *you* it was interesting" he writes to his wife. "On the way out Mr. Rogers would plan out the campaign while I walked the floor and smoked and assented. Then he would close it up with a snap and drop it and we would totally change the subject and take up the scenery. . ."

Mark Twain, like many an inventor and many a man of imagination was a poor business man. Indeed, there are minds and minds—minds that can tackle a business proposition and other minds bubbling over with ideas.

Again there is proof of that temperament of which Mark Twain insisted. Temperament decides the preference of the man and the ideals he will follow. Twain himself chose authorship, which, after all, is a kind of habit of contrivance, of building, of inventing. His friend H. H. Rogers was the organizer, the manager. What Mark Twain always needed was deliberate and systematic direction and the Standard Oil man offered just that. Like Edison, or Watt, or Dowsen, or Fulton, like how many more of that temperament, he was, in a way, indifferent to money—true, he sold his wares well, but in the long run he was a poor manager; had he not been that, he would hardly have entered upon the visionary schemes

that he did enter upon, without competent counsel. And, of course, it is the strength of ideal capitalism that the invisible directing hand does promote the general welfare, in the long run. When such men as Mark Twain can be guided or helped, or, if you like, controlled in such way as to bring their operations to the utmost pitch of efficiency, if that can be done without any sapping of self-respect, it would seem that the world of literature would be the richer.

The thought of waste of effort comes at this point. There is a place in which Mark Twain says: "In 1876 or '75, I wrote 40,000 words of a story . . . I didn't finish the story, though I re-began it several new ways, and spent altogether 70,000 words on it, then gave it up and threw it aside." And again, in a letter to William Dean Howells:

"Speaking of the ill luck of starting a piece of literary work wrong—and again and again; always aware that there is a way, if you could only think it out, which would make the thing slide effortless from the pen—the one right way, the sole form for *you*, the other forms being for men whose line those forms are, or who are capabler than yourself: . . . Last summer I started 16 things wrong—3 books and 13 mag. articles—and could only make 2 little wee things, 1,500 words altogether, succeed:—only that out of piles and stacks of diligently wrought MS., the labor of 6 weeks' unremitting effort. I could make all of those things go if I would take the trouble to re-begin each one half a dozen times on a new plan. But none of them was important enough except one.

"A week ago I examined the MS.—10,000 words—and saw that the plan was a totally impossible one—for me; but a new plan suggested itself, and straightway the tale began to slide from the pen

with ease and confidence. I think I've struck the right one this time. I have already put 12,000 words of it on paper. . . . In the present form I could spin 16 books out of it with comfort and joy; but I shall deny myself and restrict it to one."

Whether under happier conditions Mark Twain would not have lost that precious time is subject for discussion. Environment affected him as it does every sensitive man—environment and condition. In the uncongenial climate of trouble and financial worry which he hid from the world, the flowers of his fancy did not brightly bloom. There is the indifferent tale "Tom Sawyer Abroad" for instance. One remembers, in the same connection, what Schiller wrote of Goethe in 1800: "On the whole, he produces very little now, rich as he still is in invention and execution. His spirit is not sufficiently at ease; his wretched domestic circumstances, which he is too weak to alter, make him so unhappy." But after all, why speculate idly? Nature is wasteful and life is a very inefficient business and the only men seriously concerned about waste and inefficiency, are the very men denounced by the idealists, strangely enough.

I have passed over the domestic tragedy, for it was that, that shocked Mark Twain in his moment of happiness, when, after giving his readings in all the English speaking countries, in Australia, India, South Africa, he landed in England conscious of having won and being able to pay his debts. His wife was with him, and also his daughters Clara and Jean, the daughter Susy being at home. She had not accompanied them on the world's

tour because of failing health. In England, the family received a cable message telling of Susy's serious condition and mother and daughter sailed at once. They had not crossed the ocean when a second cable was received announcing Susy's death. Then Mark Twain's heart broke. Out of his grief grew one of the noblest letters written from man to man which I, for one, have been unable to read twice because of its emotional appeal. It affects me as does Chopin's Funeral March and I avoid it. I refer to the letter to Henry C. Robinson.

That following winter, Mark Twain stayed in London, working on his book, "Following the Equator," which finally cleared him from debt. Not until 1900 did the family return to America, and Mrs. Clemens could not bring herself to visit the Hartford home again. Four years later she died in Florence, Italy, on June 5th, 1904. "Shall we ever laugh again?" writes Mark Twain to Howells. "If I could only see a dog that I knew in the old times! and could put my arms around his neck and tell him all, everything, and ease my heart."

But the old lion has fire in him still. Weak with grief, yet he fires up at the thought of the "never ending audacity of elected persons," the fine old, philosophical anarchist that he was. There is a notable letter to Twitchell who had not lost his hope in political panaceas and institutional reform. And Mark Twain scores him. "It is interesting, wonderfully interesting—the miracles which party politics can do with a man's mental and moral make-up. Look at McKinley, Roosevelt

and yourself; in private life spotless in character; honorable, honest, just, humane, generous; scorning trickeries, treacheries, suppressions of the truth, mistranslations of the meanings of fact, the filching of credit earned by another, the condoning of crime, the glorifying of base acts; in political life the *reverse* of all this. . . ." And again: "I wish I could learn to remember that it is unjust and dishonorable to put blame upon the human race for any of its acts. For it did not make itself, it did not make its nature, it is merely a machine, it is moved wholly by outside influences, it has no hand in creating the outside influences nor in choosing which of them it will welcome or reject, its performance is wholly automatic, it has no more mastership nor authorship over its mind than it has over its stomach, which receives material from the outside and does as it pleases with it, indifferent to its proprietor's suggestions, even, let alone his commands; wherefore, whatever the machine does—so-called crimes and infamies included—is the personal act of its Maker, and He, solely, is responsible. I wish I could learn to pity the human race instead of censuring it and laughing at it; and I could, if the outside influences of old habit were not so strong upon my machine. It vexes me to catch myself praising the clean private citizen Roosevelt and blaming the soiled President Roosevelt, when I know that neither praise nor blame is due to him for any thought or word of his, he being merely a helpless and irresponsible coffee-mill ground by the hand of God."

And because I most heartily believe Mark Twain to have been one of the sanest Americans that ever lived, I introduce, as the lawyers would say, a letter written to Andrew Carnegie under date of February 10th, 1906, and written from 21 Fifth Avenue, New York. For Mark Twain, though no dipsomaniac, loved his wine and his whisky as many a good man has done before him, and by his bedside had a little table, on which stood a bottle of whisky and pipes and tobacco and cigars. Andrew Carnegie, being told of this happy custom, thereafter made it his business to keep Mark Twain supplied with liquor. Here is the letter which throws light upon Twain's consumption.

"Dear St. Andrew,—The whisky arrived in due course from over the water; last week one bottle of it was extracted from the wood and inserted into me, on the installment plan, with this result; that I believe it to be the best, smoothest whisky now on the planet. Thanks, oh, thanks; I have discarded Peruna. . . ."

Here again are pregnant words from the old lion heart. They are taken from a letter written to the Russian Tchaikowski, who was in America with Gorky looking for aid for the revolutionists pledged to destroy the Russian dynasty:

"My sympathies are with the Russian revolution. . . . I hope it will succeed, and now that I have talked with you, I take heart that it will. Government by falsified promises, by lies, by treacheries, and by the butcher knife for the aggrandizement of a single family of drones and its idle and viscious kin has been borne quite long enough in Russia, I should think, and it is to be hoped that the roused nation, now rising in its strength, will presently put an end to it, and set

up the republic in its place. Some of us, even the white headed, may live to see the blessed day when Czars and Grand Dukes will be as scarce there as I trust they are in heaven."

There is little that is pleasant to record in that last year and a half of his life. Indeed, it was shadowed by one great grief, the sudden death of his daughter Jean and the knowledge that came to him that those "breast pains" from which he suffered meant heart trouble. A flash of the old daring iconoclast is seen in a letter to an unknown in Buffalo who sent him an incomplete list of the world's "One Hundred Greatest Men" who had exerted the largest visible influence on the life and activities of the race, and, at the same time, asked Mark Twain whether, in his opinion, the name of Jesus as founder of Christianity should be added.

"The terms require you to add Jesus," said Mark Twain. "And they doubly and trebly require you to add Satan. From A.D. 350 to A.D. 1850 these gentlemen exercised a vaster influence over a fifth of the human race than was exercised over that fraction of the race by all other influences combined. Ninety-nine hundredths of this influence proceeded from Satan, the remaining fraction of it from Jesus. During those 1,500 years fear of Satan and Hell made 99 Christians where love of God and Heaven made one. During those 1,500 years, Satan's influence was worth very nearly a hundred times as much to the business as was the influence of all the rest of the Holy Family put together.

"You have asked me a question and I have answered it seriously and sincerely. You have put Buddha—a god with a following, at one time, greater than Jesus ever had; a god with perhaps a better evidence of his godship than that which is offered for Jesus'. How then, in fairness,

can you leave Jesus out? And if you put him in, how can you logically leave Satan out? Thunder is good; thunder is impressive; but it is the lightning that does the work."

His, you see, was the religion of Be and of Do and not of idle talk, of empty profession. His last letter shows the man, being as it was a communication giving instructions for the disposal of \$6,000 with which to build the Mark Twain Library at Redding. A letter a short time before dealt with a proposition to buy a magic lantern so that the country people about his place might have some form of amusement. So, for me, April the twenty-first, is a black-letter day, for on that date in the year 1910, my hero died.

* * *

Thus then Mark Twain, philosopher, good citizen, up-standing man who saw straight and set down clearly what he saw; and thought straight, too, setting down in clear language what he thought. He was free from cant, from pretence, from humbug and he stood foursquare for the freedom of the individual. And when I am saddened by the sight of tub-thumping evangelists in the land in which I have my home, when I am sickened at the sight of men howling for a spurious Americanism, then I find it good to turn to my polaris Mark Twain. the man unafraid of his thoughts because they were his.

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 384 Four One-Act Plays.
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 Yeats.
 229 Les Precieuses Ridicules
 (English). Moliere.
 309 Nobody Who Apes Nobility
 (Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme)
 (English). Moliere.
 371 Empedocles on Etna.
 Arnold.
 376 Woman of No Importance.
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 354 The League of Youth. Ibsen.
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 303 Rosmersholm. Ibsen.
 350 Hedda Gabler. Ibsen.
 295 The Master Builder. Ibsen.
 80 Pillars of Society. Ibsen.
 16 Ghosts. Henrik Ibsen.
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 Hugo.
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 90 The Mikado. W. S. Gilbert.
 31 Pelleas and Melisande.
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 46 Salome. Oscar Wilde.
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 Earnest. O. Wilde.
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 226 The Anti-Semites.
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Shakespeare's Plays

- 359 The Man Shakespeare.
 Vol. 1. Frank Harris.

- 360 Man Shakespeare.
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 362 Man Shakespeare.
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 240 The Tempest.
 241 Merry Wives of Windsor.
 242 As You Like It.
 243 Twelfth Night.
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 251 Midsummer Night's Dream.
 252 Othello. The Moor of Venice.
 253 King Henry VIII.
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 255 King Lear.
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 160 Lecture on Shakespeare.
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 386 Creatures That Once Were
 Men. Gorki.
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 440 Cavalleria Rusticana. Von Keler.
 441 I Pagliacci. Von Keler.
 456 Carmen. Von Keler.
 457 Lohengrin. Von Keler.
 458 Tannhauser. Von Keler.
 459 Das Rheingold. Von Keler.

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- 470 Guide to Kant. Thomas.
 421 Yoga Philosophy. Carrington.
 443 Guide to Francis Bacon. Durant.
 477 Theosophy in Outline. Willis

